

Intro:	00:04	This is Force for Hire, a deep dive into private military contracting and how it's transforming the battlefield. I'm Michelle Harven and I'm Desmond Farris, "Mad Mike" Hoare live life at full speed, best known for his time as a mercenary commander in the Congo and leading an attempted coup in the Seychelles.
Michelle Harven:	00:21	He began his military career as a soldier in the British army during World War Two and rose through the ranks to lieutenant colonel afterward. He moved to South Africa as an accountant but itching for adventure. It wasn't long before he was running safaris and eventually leading a mercenary force.
Desmon Farris:	00:39	His son Chris Hoare, wrote a book about his father's exploits called "Mad Mike" Hoare: The legend. He's been interviewing his father throughout the years to get a greater sense of his past and thoughts on mercenaries.
Chris Hoare:	00:52	Do you see mercenaries today having potential? Yes, I do. More than ever. More than ever subject to it and being properly run. Good example is this chapter, I forget his name, who started to professional unit company. I think the press gave him a little positive coverage and one or two of the Gold Coast residents had said, since that unit has being here, we've been able to sleep, the market is opened, etc., etc. That's exactly my attitude, that they can do it quicker than any regular unit.
Michelle Harven:	01:33	In this episode, Chris will be telling the story of his father, the nuns and priests he rescued during the Congo crisis, how we got involved with the CIA and a lot of other crazy stuff, and by the way, mad Mike is proof that living fast is not always a trade off for longevity. The legend celebrated a significant birthday just this year.
Chris Hoare:	01:53	Yes, that's right. He turned a hundred on Saint Patrick's day 17th of March and being Irish, of course, this was all very auspicious.
Michelle Harven:	02:04	That's amazing. And although I'm making it to a hundred he lived dangerously. He was an adventurous soul. Can you just sort of paint a picture of your father for us?
Chris Hoare:	02:15	When war broke out, Mike was drafted immediately and he always described it as the happiest day of his life. Soon he was identified as somebody with potential and the, and I've seen his report, his war record that says that he was a forceful and aggressive type who will go from, and then he joined a

reconnaissance unit and went to India working in armored vehicles and then took a Hema where he saw action. And really, it seems to me if I can try and be impartial, that he was a brilliant soldier. He told me that his commanding officer had told him he was the best bloody soldier in the British army. And of course by the end of the war, he was a major at the age of 26 and it must be said that the stories of the World War had had attracted him. And then during the war he hit the ship.

Chris Hoare:

[03:13](#)

He was on to go to India, called at Cape Town and they spent about 10 days or two weeks ashore in Cape Town. And Mike always described Cape Town in the same three words. He always said the girls were magnificent. Regular blokes drove Cadillacs and the sun never stopped shining. So there you had a number of factors drawing him to Africa. Well, I don't know if you believe in the coincidences, but it all actually started in 1958 when Mike went looking for the lost city of the Kalahari. The Kalahari is a massive visit of passing in South Africa. Of course, he didn't find it, but in found the business opportunity and that was to run safaris the next year and own that. Safari was an American who purported to be the last consul at the consulate in Durban. In fact, he wasn't. He was CIA and he and Mike became best friends and did adventures together.

Chris Hoare:

[04:22](#)

And then in '61 when things went wrong in the Congo and the presidents of Katanga called for missionary troops, John recalled the CIA men egged Mike on and encouraged him to sign up. And you know, of course the jobs like that are not advertised in the newspapers. So it had to be an inside job as it were. And that's how it happened. Well, the Cogo was a Belgian colony and had been for about 60 years or more. And rather hurriedly, the Belgians gave the Congo independence then happened on the 30th of June, 1960 there was immediate may him when the local people started a minor rebellion and taking it out on the whites who they regarded as the source of all their problems, the whites being the Belgians, the Belgian settlers in the Congo. So at the beginning of the following year, February, 1961 they called for mercenary troops and that is when Mike got involved and found himself in charge of about 120 English speaking mercenaries, the Catanan government wanted to use mercenaries to, to combat the United Nations and to hold of the Congolese army.

Chris Hoare:

[05:48](#)

Looking at it fresh from now, I think it's quite obvious that what happened, there was very much a sideshow Mike and his men didn't really achieve very much, but ultimately they were expelled from the Congo in the middle of 1961 well, after Katanga, Mike resumed his former life, which was leading

safaris in Bechuanaland, which is now Botswana for two years. And then he got the call as it were, you know, he was needed. He had made a name for himself in contango in 61 Mike going back in 1964 but then the situation had changed. The prime minister, the Congo who was named Moïse Tshombe had gone into exile and the tango had been forcibly brought back into the fold as it were. And by this time a communist inspired rebellion had the ignited in the east of the country mainly, and it was making its way almost unhindered towards Leopoldville the capital.

Chris Hoare: [07:01](#)

And so by the middle of 1964 they controlled about half the country, possibly more. And of course the Americans and the Belgians and the West in fact were concerned that the Congo was going to fall to the communists. Now the interesting thing is that of course a way of background, this was the Cold War was at its height at this time and the space race and one must ask: Why was America so keen that the Congo should not fall into communist hands? And the answer is one simple word and that is cobalt. Cobalt is found mainly in early two places in the world. Russia and the Congo served from America's point of view. If the of fell to the communists, they would have no cobalt and of course Kobo to be used in the missile systems in rocket systems, weaponry and other strategic equipment like that so that they had to hold the Congo.

Chris Hoare: [08:10](#)

And that's why they got involved in, in fact, the Americans with some help from the Belgians were the ones behind the employment of Mike and, and his five commander in, in 1964 and Moïse Tshombe, the former prime minister of Katanga was now the back in power as prime minister of the whole of the Congo. And so he was advised to bring Mike back. So it wasn't that easy. But then I was employed because what were they to do? What are the options? Did the Congo have, you know, basically their house was burning down and you have to do something. And so they employed mercenary soldiers and that was Mike and his men. And Mike was always very sentimental and being Irish and knowing about "The Wild Geese" from history. He decided to name his men "The Wild Geese," which of course was quite a clever move The Wild Geese were Irish soldiers.

Chris Hoare: [09:18](#)

They're going back in history now, I think at the end of the 16 hundreds who had been beaten by the British in a battle. And they decided that rather than fall under the British yolk, they would rather go and fight for European armies as paid soldiers in fact as mercenaries. And the interesting thing is that the mainly the French and Belgian mercenaries who came to the

Congo in 1961 where as Mike said, an unsold [intelligible]. And uh, cause it gave mercenaries a bad name. And of course the, the pressed dubbed them les affreux, the frightful ones. And Mike wanted to differentiate himself from these, les affreux. So although one doesn't think of mercenary soldiers as being gentlemanly, Mike was first and foremost a British army officer. And he took those attitudes with them to the Congo. And for example, everybody who was there will tell you that Mike insisted that they should shave every day, whether they were in action or out of action, their uniforms should be clean and neat.

Chris Hoare: [10:47](#)

They should wear berets, plain green berets, no camouflage caps, no daggers, nothing fancy like that for Mike. And the one of one of the guys told me that they even sent somebody back to South Africa for wearing the wrong color hat. And in fact, uh, one of the men who was in the Congo said that Mike was an officer and a gentleman with a bit of pirate thrown in. And I rather like that, that description because they, there was something of the pirate about Mike. Mike for years, for even decades, didn't talk about the CIA. And if you look at his books and he wrote three of them on the, on the Congo, I think he does. He doesn't even mentioned the CIA or being involved with the CIA. But the fact is that, that he was a I asked specifically about this in, in our recorded interviews.

Chris Hoare: [11:52](#)

And I asked him if he was on the payroll and he said he wasn't. And I said, well, wouldn't you like to have been? And he said, no, no, no. He didn't like that kind of thing. What he liked was a big chunk of money every now and then. And that's what the Americans gave him. And so, uh, but you know, I think we should be clear, the, he was definitely linked to the CIA. And the, the, the amazing thing is that after six months in the Congo, in 1964 Mike had had enough, you know, this was the, the Joseph Conrad's in a station. It was, it was a horror show. And you know, Mike couldn't take it. So when he got back to Durban at the end of 1964, he told the CIA, that he'd had enough and he wasn't going to go back. And he told me that they said to him, you have to go back. Then he said, well, I'm not, and they said, you have to. And he said, I'm not. So they'd said, name your price. And ultimately he did go back.

Michelle Harven: [13:05](#)

When we come back, Mike and "The Wild Geese take back the city of Stanleyville

Michelle Harven: [13:09](#)

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Chris Hoare: [13:57](#)

You know, many people referred to the rebels, savages and, and certainly they did use, uh, savage techniques of, of torture. The, the traditional method of torture. If they caught, one of the enemy would be to tie his body to a tree and then to cut off the arms above the elbow and cut off the legs below the knees and then shove a sharp stick up his rectum and leave the man to die. Uh, you know, so, so there were a lot of massacres of nuns and priests, a horrendous massacre of nuns and priests and the raping of nuns. Many of the nuns they rescued were pregnant. It was a, you know, there was cannibalism and uh, very little discipline and, and, and of course the ANC, the, the Congo army were equally guilty of committing atrocities when, when they were able to, what had happened was the rebels had taken Stanleyville, which was the, the second biggest city in the Congo in August 1964.

Chris Hoare: [15:27](#)

And in amongst the people they took hostage, where were all the staff of the American embassy, including some CIA personnel. So the first objective of the mercenaries was to, was to take Stanleyville and Mike and his men who were known as also known as 5 Commando, didn't get the go at it to go until it was very late, so that it was the paratroopers who got to Stanleyville first. They landed on the air field, made their way into town. Meantime, there were several hundred, I think, 300 hostages being held. And when they, when, when their captors heard that the paratroopers were on their way, they heard it, the, the hostages into the city square where at a certain point they opened fire on them. And unfortunately, 28 were massacred, including the famous, the American missionary by the name of Carlson. And of course this was, this was world news.

Chris Hoare: [16:41](#)

A couple of hours latter, The Wild Geese came in by road from the south. Uh, there was still a lot of mopping up to do. Uh, and, and that happened over the next few days. But essentially the, the, the rebels lost the city at that point. There were thousands of nuns and priests in the Congo and after Stanleyville had fallen to the mercenary Mike's mercenaries and the Belgian paratroopers towards the end of 1964, the government asked Mike to "please, uh, go and rescue the nuns and priests all

around the Stanleyville area" of which they were probably about 2000. And of course, this wasn't part of his original brief, but he, he felt obliged to, to do this. Uh, there were nuns and priests from, from many European countries, and, and also Congolese, uh, nuns and priests in mission stations. And, and unfortunately, um, Mike and his men were, were too late sometimes, and they would just find some clothes on the banks of the river and they never found the nuns and priests.

Michelle Harven: [18:00](#)

It was controversial because the mercenaries were white and, and worse than that many of them came from South Africa, which of course at that time had an apartheid policy, you know, separateness between whites and blacks. And, and the world did not approve of that. And so it was doubly bad in a way, but the, the Congo had a problem. And in fairness, um, I've, I've seen the documentation and Tshombe the, the prime minister appeal to five African countries for help saying, look, we've got a big problem here. Come and help us and, and nobody can to help. So what was he supposed to do? So he did, he did the only thing he knew how to do and that was to employ mercenaries who happened to be white. After the Simba rebellion was crushed, which was by the end of 1965, Mike had well and truly had enough and he left the Congo.

Chris Hoare: [19:15](#)

But the job had pretty much been done. The other, you know, his, his unit continued in the Congo for about another year and a bit, but the, the main work had been done and Mike more or less retired to, to Durban in South Africa and wrote a book about it. He was approached, uh, quite a number of times by people to come and assist them. And for example, Nigeria who were in a war by now with the breakaway province called Botswana. And so Mike visited both sides in 1967 he was also approached to fight and then go to Mozambique and, and Cambodia for that Cambodia in 1970 and so after the Congo, he, he, he didn't in the immediate term, after the Congo, he didn't get involved in any mercenary work. And one day in 1977 you got a call from the producer to say, how would you like to be the military and technical advisor to a film about mercenaries in Africa?

Chris Hoare: [20:31](#)

And Oh, by the way, Richard Burton is going to play you. And of course, the amazing thing was that Richard Burton was one of the few heroes that Mike had in his life. Richard Burton, of course, was a famous Shakespearean actor. Mike loved Shakespeare, knew his Shakespeare, had memorized many lines from Shakespeare. And so now he was going to hopefully rub shoulders with, with Richard Burton. And he told me he did have some moments alone with Richard Burton where they

discussed Shakespeare. The story I like best is when the script called for Burton to stand on a first floor balcony, uh, and to encourage his men who are on the ground floor. Uh, and, and Mike said, no, no, no, not like that. You've got to get right up close to your men, look them in the eye and encourage them. And apparently they did that pretty much at the same time, uh, as, as the film was being made, Mike was approached by some exiles.

Chris Hoare: [21:48](#)

They call themselves the exiles from the Seychelles to, to help them to reinstate their man who they regarded as the rightful president. He had off the old being ousted in a coup in 1977. And so he agreed because it, it, it wouldn't have meant replacing the, their own full government, which was a socialist government Marxist inclined government and replacing them with the pro [inaudible] government. So that was always Mike's, uh, interest. That's the thing he liked to do. And, and so he agreed to help them even though they had hardly any money. Well, what happened was, uh, he did a number of reconnaissance trips to the Seychelles and ultimately decided that the job could be done with about \$300,000, which of course in 1979 was worth a lot more than it is today. Uh, and, uh, the, the, the South African governments in the form of the army, the South African Defense Force, uh, agreed to provide the weapons.

Chris Hoare: [23:12](#)

And one day a truck pulled up at Mike's House in and, uh, unloaded 75, AK 40 sevens and 23,000 rounds of ammunition. And I forget how many rocket launcher and two way radios and, and quite a lot of equipment in fact. Uh, but essentially, you know, \$300,000 was, was not enough money and their plans for getting the weapons to the islands kept on falling through. Uh, I think partly because of this problem of money and ultimately the, the intelligence service of the South African government got involved and said, no, what you should do is take the weapons with you on a charter plot, uh, and they should be hidden in a false bottom suitcases. And so that's what happened. And, and in fact, in fairness to Mike, uh, nine people went as an advanced party in driblets and drabs from Durban to Johannesburg and then to Victoria, the capital of the Seychelles.

Chris Hoare: [24:25](#)

And you know, those were the days before every before we had scanning. And, uh, everybody just sailed through. So when the 50 went with my on the airplane to the Seychelles, I, they were expecting to get through without any trouble in it. And it was just bad luck. Somehow they found a weapon. And then all hell broke loose, the mercenaries started shooting. And Plus, uh, I've been told that the, the men had been drinking quite heavily on

the plane and, uh, so all in all, the, there was quite a lot against them and, uh, they decided to retreat to the air port building and to try again at first lot. Um, and of course, as we all know, uh, uh, burying seven Oh seven traveling from Harare in Zimbabwe to Bombay in India, uh, needed to refuel in the Seychelles. And so they came into land and, uh, us to be refueled.

Chris Hoare: [25:39](#)

And so Mike and his men were in charge of the airport at this time. So they refueled the plane and of course as we know, the men decided that they would be better off elsewhere. Um, but they didn't like the idea of going into Bombay. So they went, uh, on the plane and us to go to, to Durban. And of course the court later found that it was a hijacking and it does sound like it once the court case didn't go well for the men. And ultimately my, and one of the men were found guilty of various crimes and Mike was sentenced to 10 years in jail. The senior guys got five years and so on to the rank and file, you've got six months. Of course they weren't found guilty of, of trying to depose the Seychelles government rule that the charges were relating to a crimes to do with the aviation.

Chris Hoare: [26:46](#)

And of course we will agitating behind the scenes for him to, to be released and not say a number of lawyers helped us. Nobody charged us anything. Um, we did all sorts of things to, to try and get him out. Um, but, but none of them appeared to work until one day this presidential amnesty was announced. And what it consisted of were three conditions that to qualify for this amnesty, you had to be a first offender over 65 years of age and to have served a quarter of your sentence. And so we were delighted when we figured it out and we saw that Mike would qualify. And in fact, in the family, we thought, well, these, these terms were tailor made for Mike. And, uh, the government had at last, had done something to, to help the man get out of prison and the man off the all who they were helping before the coup to, to oust an unfriendly government.

Chris Hoare: [27:56](#)

So we felt it was only fair that he should get some kind of amnesty, or pardon. And, and of course, he, he did come out out, uh, 33 months in jail. Mike said in his book, Congo mercenary that he was proud to have lived the Wild Geese and proud to have achieved what they achieved. And he dedicated his book to those who did not come back. So on the one hand we have that, but it's my experience that ever since then he was somewhat reticent about having done what he did. And for example, I used to say to him, why didn't you go on a speaking tour of America? You'll earn decent money and you'll enjoy it. But he wouldn't because it was always going to be about having

been a mercenary. And you know, as we all know mercenary soldiering that there's something distasteful about it. Nobody really knows exactly what it is that's so distasteful, but it wasn't really approved of. And I think Mike just prefer to forget about the whole thing.

- Speaker 5: [29:23](#) I've been running quite uh, interested and even surprised to, to hear from so many people who have bought my book and read my book and many of them say things like, thank you for placing it all on record. Of course Mike has had detractors during his life, but the people who write to me all thing he is a fantastic hero. And yes. Um, the world authority on mercenaries in the Congo is on record as saying that Mike and his men changed history in the Congo and yes, they, they kept the communists out. And then he goes on to say that, uh, seeing that, uh, that history of 5 Commando was largely story of Mike Hoare. This is the case on one man changing the course of history.
- Desmon Farris: [30:23](#) There's so much going on in this story that he's done.
- Michelle Harven: [30:27](#) Yeah. I guess he was just sort of all business and no nonsense. Like this is just what has to happen.
- Desmon Farris: [30:33](#) The stuff this one man did revolutionize the way say mercenaries or private military contractor operated.
- Michelle Harven: [30:40](#) I mean, the last line of this is a case of one man changing the course of history I think, uh, is pretty crazy to think about.
- Desmon Farris: [30:47](#) But I believe he's a legend. He did all this stuff and at the end of it just walked away. Like it was nothing but it was everything. Thanks to Chris Hoare for sharing the story of his father. You can read his book Mad Mike Hoare: The legend to learn more about Mike's adventures. We, of course couldn't fit all of them into one episode, so check it out at madmikehoare.com In the next episode, we'll be hearing the story of three contractors who were taken hostage in Iraq in 2016 and were held for an excruciating 31 days.
- Speaker 6: [31:22](#) All was the first day because you are in disbelieve is this fucking happened to me after 12 or 13 mission. This happened to me? I always thought I might get killed one day, but being taken hostage that never crossed my mind. Don't forget to subscribe and while you're there, leave us a review. You can also let us know your thoughts at podcast@stripes.com also, follow us on Twitter for updates and stars and stripes

Michelle Harven:	<u>31:51</u>	Force for Hire's supervising editors are Bob Reed and Terry Leonard Digital Team lead and editor is Michael Darnell.
Speaker 6:	<u>31:58</u>	Thanks for listening. This is Force for Hire.